

CHARLIE CRANE

J. Fearon

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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

CHARLIE CRANE

BY J. FEARON

CHARLES ALLEN CRANE was born in Vancouver, B. C., on April 10, 1906. When he was nine months old he lost both sight and hearing through spinal meningitis. He was admitted to the School for the Deaf, Halifax, N. S., on May 10, 1916, when he was a little over ten years of age. He is one of a family of eight—four boys and four girls—and his parents are healthy, intelligent, and well-educated people. The first official notice I had of the boy was through Dr. Alexander Robinson, superintendent of education for British Columbia, who wrote to ask on what terms he might be admitted to this school, and gave me at the same time the address of his parents. A copy of our annual report, on the back of which was the manual alphabet, was sent to the parents, and Mrs. Crane immediately taught herself to spell on the fingers, and when Charlie arrived here we found that he had learnt the names of many objects, but had, strictly speaking, no language.

Charlie is a bright, handsome boy, big and strong for his age and full of vitality. He has a keen sense of humor, is most inquisitive, and as happy as the day is long. If he suspects you are fooling him, up like a flash goes his hand to your throat to find out whether or not you are laughing. At the time of writing he has been at this school six months, and it is safe to say that he has a larger vocabulary than the average deaf child after five years' instruction. He has a most retentive memory and seldom requires a word, no matter how uncommon, to be spelled to him a second time. Two or three months ago, as a memory test, I spelled on his fingers twice the French sentence, containing for him at least a most unusual order and combination of letters, "Qu'est ce que c'est que cela." He repeated the sentence correctly then and again several days afterward. He had been about five weeks here when the school closed for the summer, and one



Charlie Crane (blind and deaf) conversing with Alexander Graham Bell and Mr. J. Fearon, at Dr. Bell's summer home, Beinn Bhreagh, near Baddeck, in Nova Scotia. Photograph by Gilbert H. Grosvenor.

day in the holidays his teacher was surprised to see him spelling to himself the names of pupils. She watched him carefully and found that he only omitted seven out of the ninety-seven pupils in attendance.

In some respects, though ten years of age, Charlie is still a baby, while in other ways he is a little philosopher. Heaven is very real and near to him, and on more than one occasion he has requested his teacher to lift him up so that he might touch it. One morning recently he heard of the death of a schoolmate, which affected him greatly. Sitting still and thoughtful for a minute or two, he spelled "Harry is dead. He is in heaven. I have a spirit. God is a spirit. God is in me." One evening lately, kneeling at

his bedside, he repeated his usual little prayer and, being evidently particularly pious on the occasion, he added, "The maple leaf for ever."

Geography, if I may so call it, has a fascination for him, and he seems to be endeavoring to make a world for himself by finding out from all who come in touch with him the names of countries and what the people are called who inhabit them. He has wormed out the names of numbers of streets in London, Paris, New York, Washington, Vancouver, and in other cities. The other day he asked his teacher the names of the streets in heaven and she, being an ordinary mundane person like ourselves, confessed she did not know, which caused her to fall far in his estimation. Her account of the daily routine duties of an angel and of the composition of the sun was equally unsatisfactory to him.

It is difficult to approximate this boy's present attainments, as every one in the school—teachers, pupils, and other officers—has contributed more or less in his instruction. The natural method has been followed, and the teachers have been asked to try to forget that he is deaf and blind and to spell into his hand as far as possible what they or the mother would address to his ear were he a normal child. In this natural manner he must have acquired in the six months he has been here a vocabulary of at least two thousand words, as well as endless question forms, which he thoroughly understands and uses. He has learnt all the sounds and their combinations, with the exception of *dzh* (*j*), which he pronounces yet as *dz*. His voice is pleasant, and the sounds *b*, *d*, *g*, *l*, *r*, *s*, and *z*, so difficult to the ordinary deaf child, are very pure and distinct. Though writing slowly, he writes very correctly on both the typewriter and braille slate. This morning he came into the office and spelled "I want to telephone to Mrs. B," who is one of his friends in the city. I thought at first he wished me to telephone for him, but no, he wished to telephone for himself. I called up Mrs. B, and Charlie, in a clear, distinct voice, said,

"Please come to see me." Each word was perfectly intelligible to her. I, of course, took her reply, which was an invitation for him to visit her. On getting the message, he insisted on telephoning an acceptance, and of his own initiative he said slowly, but most distinctly, "I will go to see you tomorrow afternoon." He has accomplished all this in the short space of six months by the sense of *touch alone*—a sense which I think is not being used nearly as much as it might be in the oral instruction of the deaf.

From my observation of this boy, as well as of Jean Veinot—another pupil here who is similarly afflicted—it would seem that, as far as the acquisition, comprehension, and use of language are concerned, it is an advantage for a deaf child to be also blind. It is the ideal condition for cutting out signs and for compelling the child to depend entirely on verbal language. The marvelous progress that this boy and girl have made by the natural method and the pleasure it has been to them serve to convince me more strongly than ever that the teaching of language for the sake of language has been the bane of the education of the deaf child, and too often of the hearing. Many teachers seem to think they must teach language first in order that by its means the child may acquire information later. The food of the brain is not language, but ideas—and new, interesting ideas, suitable to the child's age and experience. Language must be taught from the first in living association with these if the mental development of the child is to be normal and natural. Give a child nuts with good, sweet kernels and he will go on cracking them unceasingly; but give him empty shells and see how soon he will tire. Such is language unassociated with new and interesting information. Our children are crying for bread and we are giving them stones. How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable must seem to our little deaf children this daily grind of the language factory.

One beautiful summer morning fifteen years ago I was walking round the grounds of our school with Helen Keller,

when she suddenly remarked that there was soon going to be a change in the weather. There was nothing to indicate to my eye or untrained sense of touch anything but a continuation of the glorious weather we had been having; but before the afternoon was over the change had come. I asked her how she knew, and she said she felt it, adding that the sense of touch was by far the most important sense we had, and that the possibility of its development was incalculable. I have found out since in dealing with deaf-blind children that this is undoubtedly true. Touch is, in certain respects, far more accurate and delicate than sight or hearing, and speech is far more tangible than visible. The speech of the deaf is far from what it should be, and I feel that this is largely our fault as teachers. I am convinced that if the speech of the average deaf child is ever to approach the normal, it will not be brought about through inherited speech tendencies or sight alone, but largely by the development and use of these marvelous touch sensations. If Charlie Crane had been brought under instruction here five or six years earlier, I feel sure his speech would have been far nearer the normal than that of any totally deaf child in our school; and is it not possible that if Helen Keller had been taught from the first by speech and speech-reading alone her wonderful attainments would not have been less than they are? This is largely a theoretical idea, but it is expressed to call more attention to the marvelous possibilities of the sense of touch, and in the hope that its further development and use may be instrumental in improving the speech of the deaf child.

UNCORRECTED COMPOSITIONS AND LETTERS
BY CHARLIE CRANE

Prince is a dog. He can run. He is grey. He is good. He can bark. He has a tail. He is a big dog. He is in Vancouver. I have a cat called Bill. Bill is brown. Bill can mew. Bill is a good cat. It has a fur. Bill can climb up a tree. Bill and Prince are my cat and dog.



CHARLIE CRANE

Mr. Fearon went to Five Island Lake. He skated on the ice. I went to Mr. Lawrence's house with Jean. I ate baked beans and bread and foxberries and pound cake. I drank tea. Mr. Lawrence took the boys to the woods and they brought the spruce. The wind is blowing very hard. This is the twenty-fourth of November.

DEAR ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL:

Mr. F. is well. You are in Washington. It is a city. I saw Graham and Nancy Fairchild last summer. What street is their home on? I dug in the garden yesterday. I am talking to you on the paper. I got a box of fudge and chocolates from my mother this morning. Jean wrote a long letter to you on the type-writer. It is snowing very hard. I will coast in a sled. I am industrious.

Your loving friend,

CHARLIE ALLEN CRANE.

DEAR SANTA CLAUS:

Please bring me a big sled and skates at Christmas. You will arrive in two weeks. You have a red coat with white fur cuffs and a red cap and white hair and white beard. The boys will see you. You are an old man. You have a big sleigh and eight deers. You will give new toys to the boys. You will be in the dining room.

Your loving friend,

CHARLIE ALLEN CRANE.

MY DEAR FATHER:

I got a letter from you. I went for a walk yesterday. I received a box from my mother on Friday. You are a very good man. This is Monday. I will go home to Vancouver in June. I have a new cap and mittens and braces and garters and a tie and pepper-mints and chiclets. It is raining very hard. You are in your office on Homer Street. The boys went to the woods yesterday. I received a letter from Thomas. This is the fifth of December. I shall have examinations in June. Hazel has a type-writer. Harriet goes to Queen Mary School. The ground is very muddy.

Your loving son,

CHARLIE ALLEN CRANE.

The boys went for a walk last Sunday. Madeline came from Harbour Grace, in Newfoundland, on the Florizel. The boys went to the woods for spruce last Monday. Mr. Leon drilled the boys last Tuesday. Mr. Goucher helped me. The boys played on the sitting room last Wednesday. The boys worked on the sloyd last Thursday. This is Friday. The boys will work at sloyd. Mr. Lawrence is on duty with the boys. I intend to go to Mr. Bateman's house after school. I shall have bread and butter and jam and cake and tea for supper. I shall bathe tonight. I am a nice boy. Mrs. Bateman will come for me. I telephoned to Mrs. Bateman this morning.

GERMANY IN WAR TIME *

BY MRS. H. H. GALLISON

"The deaf are made to 'hear' by their eyes, by lip-reading. 'Hearing is thus restored to them by a three months' course. I visited the three grades that compose the curriculum, and was surprised to see how readily the ability to converse is regained by the soldiers. They are taught by pictures and blackboard drawings, in easy stages, how the sounds of the letters, of words, and eventually of sentences are formed by the lips, tongue, palate, and larynx. I was able to converse with the members of the graduating class, who could lip-read so well that it was hard to believe that they had lost their hearing.

"Perhaps the most humanly interesting experience in the two lower grades was to note the frank delight of the soldiers when they found that they could convey the sounds they could not hear. With what patience did they watch a slow comrade; how complete their satisfaction when he, too, was able to repeat the exercises, or, in the second class, to convey the contents of the short stories that were systematically built up to keep nimble the soldier's brains! . . . The atmosphere of the school, its struggle, its perseverance, and its human conquest took me off my feet."

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